

Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County Re-Imagines its Role as Educators in Book “Interplay”

LOS ANGELES—Five years ago, the Natural History Museum’s Education Department embarked on a journey to become a resource for Los Angeles’ education communities and a catalyst for deep learning. Enabled by a multiyear grant from The James Irvine Foundation, the Education and Arts Roundtable — comprised of K-12 educators, community arts organizations, and the Natural History Museum — was born.

Now, the story of the Roundtable is told. The softbound book “Interplay” is authored by a trio of innovative educators — Lauren Stevenson, Elisa Callow and Emiko Ono — whose insider’s look at an innovative education project includes the exciting and sometimes chaotic moments of inspiration, as well as the provocative processes of bringing inspiring ideas to life.

The book gives first-hand accounts from teachers, scientists, artists and students (the majority from Title 1 schools). Together, they answer questions about how a museum can preserve the values of its current structures, while adapting to demands from various constituencies for greater service and relevancy; and how educators can enact an education paradigm shift, where learning becomes collaboration instead of the act of experts conveying information.

“Interplay” is a resource for educators, as well as those who seek a new model for transcending limitations of current education practice in museums as well as in schools. It will change its readers’ ideas about museum field trips and museum projects, and the surprising affinity found between artists and scientists as they engage kids.

What Educators Say About “Interplay”

“This important report explores the impact and implications for a cultural institution that decides to take seriously what research has taught us about how people learn, specifically in this case, children, older students, and young adults.”

— Richard J. Deasy
Founding Director, Arts Education Partnership

“This book should be of real value to serious museum educators — and anyone in museums who may not see themselves as ‘educators’ but do feel committed to the quality of learning in museums.”

— Steve Seidel
Harvard Graduate School of Education

Authors and Access

“Interplay” authors will appear at the American Association of Museums conference in Los Angeles: May 24, 2010 from 2:25-3:30 pm. Visit www.aam-us.org

Hard copies (\$6.99) are available from the Museum Store beginning May 2010 or by shopping online: <http://www.enssc.com/default.aspx?store=301>

A free PDF of the full publication (3.5MB) is available at the Museum’s website: (http://www.nhm.org/site/sites/default/files/for_teachers/pdf/Full_book_single_01_nhm_interplay_SINGLE.pdf)

About the Natural History Museum

The Museum was the first dedicated museum building in Los Angeles, opening its doors in 1913. It has amassed one of the world’s most extensive and valuable collections of natural and cultural history — with more than 35 million objects, some as old as 4.5 billion years. The

Natural History Family of Museums includes the NHM, the Page Museum at the La Brea Tar Pits (Hancock Park/Mid-Wilshire), and the William S. Hart Park and Museum (Newhall, California). The Family of Museums serves more than one million families and visitors annually, and is a national leader in research, exhibitions and education.

NHM Next

Last year's completed renovation of the Beaux-Arts 1913 Building, the original component of the Natural History Museum, has set the stage for the rollout of a series of new permanent experiences leading up to the Museum's centennial in 2013: *Age of Mammals* and the Haaga Family Rotunda galleries open in July 2010; *Dinosaur Mysteries* and interactive outdoor exhibits open in July 2011; and *Under the Sun*; an exhibition focusing on the Southern California environmental history, opens in late 2012.

About The James Irvine Foundation

The James Irvine Foundation is a private, nonprofit grantmaking foundation dedicated to expanding opportunity for the people of California to participate in a vibrant, successful and inclusive society. The Foundation's grantmaking focuses on three program areas: Arts, California Democracy and Youth. Since 1937 the Foundation has provided over \$1 billion in grants to more than 3,000 nonprofit organizations throughout California. With \$1.3 billion in assets, the Foundation made grants of \$67 million in 2009 for the people of California.

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